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The artist- who painted this Mason's portrait

**FREDERICK
YATES.**

FREDERICK YATES.

A RYDAL MEMORY AND APPRECIATION.

Some years ago—I do not remember how many—there came to live among us a very distinct and original personality. Very great names—the greatest in some departments of life have been and still are associated with the village by the Rotha, betwixt Loughrigg and Nab Scar. Poets, historians, writers of general literature and of fiction, politicians, educational reformers, Cabinet Ministers, the lives of all these have been linked to the homesteads that nestle about this gate of the mountains. The art that Fred Yates represented lies outside all these memories and associations. Green left behind him many wonderful drawings of old houses here, and the artist William Hull died at Rydal Lodge; but these made little impress on the personal life of the valley, so that Fred Yates, with his keen enthusiasms and his strong individuality, found a place vacant for him to fill.

"Frederic Yates, Romanticist," as the "Studio" described him in 1908, first came to Ambleside in order to paint the portrait of Miss Mason, of the House of Education. He visited Rydal, fell in love with it, and made it thereafter his home. He had just (if I remember rightly), with his wife and young daughter, made a voyage round the world, painting portraits of interesting peoples by the way. Fresh from the glories of California, the fascination of the Sandwich Islands, the beauties of Japan, he found something in Rydal that charmed and held him to the end.

At first he occupied part of the fine old farmstead of Cote How. It consisted then of two workmen's cottages and a barn. When it was altered and made into one large house he moved into a cottage on the hill behind it. Afterwards a little house—semi-detached—was built for him by Mr. le Fleming on the lower slope of Nab Scar, looking southward to Lake Windermere, and there he made permanent habitation.

He paid one visit to America in the year of the Presidential election of his friend Dr. Woodrow Wilson, and there were frequent sojourns in his London studio, which enabled him to keep in touch with the greater world of art and to arrange for exhibitions of his pictures from time to time.

He went to London early this year. He had been in bad health for some months, but few of his friends realised how serious his illness was. He entered a nursing home for an operation, from which he never recovered: he died and was buried almost before we knew that he was in any danger. So quickly did he slip out of life that the local papers for some weeks contained no record of his death.

Frederick Yates was distinctly an idealist. His originality in portrait-painting was the result chiefly of an endeavour to see below the surface. Character interested him. He excelled in studies of people of distinction, particularly of old men. He could paint a beautiful woman beautifully, but a merely pretty girl had no attraction for him. Always he sought, beneath the features, for the lives of life and thought. Sometimes he exaggerated what he saw, and his studies were not therefore in all cases satisfactory to his sitters' relatives. Nevertheless he produced a singularly interesting gallery of portraits. If these could be reproduced in black and white and published in a volume they would make a valuable record of English-speaking men and women as they were in the world before the war.

His landscapes had the same characteristic, a serious, unflinching search for truth. He painted no panoramas. He loved nature in her simple forms, as Wordsworth loved humanity. A study of trees in a group, an effect of light on a meadow slope, the glimpse of a lake seen through foliage, these he would depict joyfully and reverentially.

The Lake mountains are notoriously difficult to paint, but he loved them because he loved the quiet corners in which they abound.

There was indeed one autumn in which we had a succession of sunsets full of gorgeous colouring, and those days tempted him to a series of wider landscapes. Again there was a year when our old oaks—how many, alas! has the war taken from us—excelled themselves in the beauty of their autumnal decay. Of these he made many admirable pictures.

I think his favourite master was J. F. Millet; but he had not the gift of blending figures with landscape which enabled the Frenchman to represent in all its solemn dignity the sacrament of labour. Corot may have been his nearest inspiration, or perhaps his friend, Matthew Maris, the man who (while his pictures were selling for prodigious prices) died in a London suburb in poor circumstances;—if a man indeed be called poor who possesses all that he really values.

In the "Studio" article of 1908 we find two studies of "Snow in Rydal," which demonstrate that Frederic Yates found in nature's solemn solitary scenes the poetry that he sought.

He loved his work and loved to give it freely. In cottage homes may be found studies of old grandfathers and little children, of young soldiers home on leave, even of pet dogs.

Many friends came from long distances to see him. He exercised a simple hospitality which was not to be defeated by war conditions. If meat rations were scanty there was always fish to be caught in Rydal Lake; he was himself a clever and ingenious cook.

His talk was full of life and originality. He loved good literature, and delighted in music. His sense of humour was

strong, and it was a pleasure to him to be genially opposed. He had perhaps some of the egoism of a man who is always consciously pursuing his ideal, but his sympathies were quick and deep. A talk with him left at times a sense of having trodden the mountain heights. A personality so vivid and so unusual cannot fail to be greatly missed and regretted by divers friends, near and far away. He represented, in the life of this favoured valley, something that was not here before he came, and that we shall not easily find again.—X.

Rydal, March, 1919.



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about Scale House

Personal letters.

From

Mr. Widdowson about Scale House

1916?

Mr. Brydon

Miss Hamson on the motto on the window "

Mr. Tait about Mr. Tait

1917

who painted Miss Hamson's portrait.